

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE INSTALLATION

OF

REV. JOHN WHEELOCK ALLEN,

AS PASTOR OF THE

EVANGELICAL TRINITARIAN CHURCH

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BY REV. WILLIAM ALLEN, D. D.

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S E R M O N .

1 COR. 1 : 23, 24.—*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them, which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

IN the Christian religion there is a great, central truth, to which all others have reference, and around which they revolve : and this truth is CHRIST CRUCIFIED,—the Son of God a propitiation for sin by his death upon the cross.

The unity and majesty, the justice, mercy, and grace of God are indeed presented to us as most important truths in the Gospel ; but then at the same time we are taught, that, while there is one God, there is “one *Mediator* between God and men,” and that God now requires all men to “honor *the Son*, even as they honor the Father ;”—that He hath spoken to us by his Son, and that his Son’s name is “the only name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved.”

Doubtless we find in the Gospel the abolishment of the Jewish sacrifices ; but then it is because, that types and shadows vanish away, when the substantial anti-type has come ; it is because, that “now once in the end of the world hath Christ appeared to put away sin by *the sacrifice* of himself ;” it is because, we are “ sanc-

tified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ,"—who, after he had "offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God."

The Gospel without doubt contains the most perfect system of morals, enjoining all the various virtues, which are essential to the welfare of individuals and to the general benefit of society; but then the moral virtues are represented in the Gospel as the result of faith in Jesus Christ, or the consequence of love to him,—so that we may say, with the earnestness of the Christian poet,—

"Talk they of morals? O, thou bleeding Love!—
The grand morality is love of Thee."

And hence it is, that we hear the solemn and terrific declaration,—“if any man,”—no matter what estimable or useful qualities may belong to his character,—“if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.” If you ask the apostle Paul what should be the governing *motive* of a Christian, you may hear his reply,—“*the love of Christ* constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that they, which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him, who loved them and died for them.”

As we all have sinned, the doctrine of the pardon of sin is a most important doctrine of the Gospel; but on this point we are taught, that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission,” that “we have an advocate with the Father,” and that Jesus Christ is “*the propitiation for our sins*, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” In Him “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

Would we be justified and accepted with God?

Then are we directed to believe in Jesus, "who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Would we be assured of our immortal existence and immortal happiness in heaven? Then must we look upon the Sufferer on the cross as arising from the tomb triumphant, the first fruits of them, who sleep, and ascending to the right hand of God to prepare mansions for them, that love him. It pleased God, in bringing "many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Is not then the cross of Christ the great, central truth of our holy religion?

"We preach *Christ crucified*, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them, which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

I propose, *first*, to explain the doctrine of Christ crucified; *secondly*, to describe the classes of persons, who reject this doctrine; and, *thirdly*, to delineate the character of them, to whom this doctrine is the wisdom and the power of God.

I. *The doctrine of Christ crucified is to be explained.* For instruction on this subject it is obvious, that we must depend wholly upon scripture; for although our reason might teach us the existence of God and his attributes, as manifested in his works, yet it could teach us nothing of the Son of God; nothing of the design and effect of his mission to the earth. On these points we must seek the light of revelation. God himself must break the silence of eternity and communicate truth to man. What then is the instruction of scripture?

It is, that He, who appeared on the earth as Jesus Christ,—as the Savior, the *Messiah*,—the anointed king, priest, and redeemer,—was “with the Father before the world was;”—that by him were all things created,—and not merely things visible, the earth and the heavenly worlds above,—but also the things invisible;—that by Him,—the Word existing from the beginning,—God created all worlds;—that “all things were created by him and for him:”—yet, although he was the image of the invisible God, and rich in majesty and glory, that he emptied or disrobed himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, becoming a man upon the earth, and partaking of the infirmities of our nature.

Moreover, we are taught, that he voluntarily submitted to this humiliation in order to be a sufferer on the cross, in order that by the shedding of his blood he might expiate human guilt;—and that, rising from the dead, he ascended into heaven,—entering “the holy place above by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

We also learn, that God in his infinite wisdom and mercy devised the scheme of salvation, and *sent* his Son to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins, giving him up for us to the agonies of the cross,—his sufferings being appointed as necessary in order, that God might be *just*, while in his love he pardons sinners, who believe in Christ crucified. Now then we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption, that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteous-

ness, that he might be just and the justifier of him, that believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3 : 24—26.

If any doctrine in scripture is revealed with distinctness and with peculiar and remarkable amplitude of evidence, it is that of the expiation made for sin by *the blood of Jesus Christ*. In the fact of the atonement,—in the assertion, that Christ crucified expiates human guilt, there is nothing unintelligible and incredible :—here is no dark mystery :—we are not required to believe what we do not understand.

If, however, it should be asked,—whence is it, that the death of Christ achieves the great work of expiating guilt, or atoning for sin ? And why is it now consistent with the justice of God, when otherwise it would not have been, to pardon human iniquity ?—If to these questions we could not give a satisfactory answer ;—still it would be most unreasonable on this account to reject the doctrine of propitiation. With as much reason might we deny the fact, that the sun shines, as we stand in his light, because we know not *how* he shines. Our eye assures us, that the sun shines : the fact is certain, though it may suggest dark inquiries, which cannot be answered. The testimony of God in his word,—which cannot be less strong, than the testimony of the human eye,—assures us, that Jesus Christ has expiated guilt,—that he was “a sacrifice” for iniquity, “a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.” Let us receive the fact, even though it may be connected with difficult inquiries and may suggest insolvable questions.

In respect to the efficacy of the death of Christ, however, I do not perceive, that it is darkly mysterious or difficult to be understood. His pre-existent dignity and glory very obviously give a value to his sufferings on

the cross. An easy and common illustration of the atonement is the following :—Suppose, that many of the subjects of an earthly monarch rebel, and, being seized, are tried by the laws and sentenced to capital punishment. If now an innocent, faithful subject should offer to die in their stead, that they might be pardoned ; there would be no reason to accept his offer, for his death could answer no good purpose in reference to the laws or the order of the kingdom. But let the only Son of the King, the heir to the throne, come forward and say,—‘ Father ! my heart bleeds for these guilty, wretched men ; I offer myself to punishment in their behalf ;—let me be degraded from my dignity, and bound in chains, and brought out to some public, infamous punishment, that all the subjects in the kingdom may see how strict is thy law, how immutable the principles of thy government, how dear to thee is the order of thy dominions,—and may see it in my suffering in the stead, on account of these guilty ones. Then let pardon be offered to those of them, who shall confess their fault and accept the mercy, which I may be commissioned to offer them.’—In this case the dignity of the prince and his relation to the King would awaken a wide sympathy, or strike the public mind with awe ; and the consent of the King to the sufferings of his Son would show his determination to maintain his authority, and to overawe the spirit of disobedience, while he exercised mercy.

It may be, that the death of Christ is to be viewed in a similar light, except that God sent his Son and devised the scheme of redemption. The glorious dignity of Christ gives a value to his sufferings,—that is, causes them to awaken the astonishment of the intelligent

beings, who behold them or who are made acquainted with them: they perceive, that God is determined to support his holy and righteous law, or he would not give his own Son to die for sinners, to be “the end of the law for righteousness to every one, that believeth.” Thus it is, that God can be just, while he justifies them, who believe in his crucified Son.

From this method of mercy no one can take encouragement to commit sin with the hope of impunity, for they only will be pardoned, notwithstanding the atonement, who truly repent of their sins. Against others the law remains in all its force, with all its sanctions. By this method of mercy justice and love are made to harmonize; and God is glorified in his attributes of wisdom and goodness, while the penitent, believing sinner is saved.

But whether or not we discern the reason of the efficacy of the atonement, the fact remains unshaken. Without the shedding of blood there was no remission under the law. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness by the Gospel: but now we may have redemption. And even at the moment of belief in the name of the Redeemer we may become justified in the sight of God,—reconciled to him,—redeemed from the thralldom of sin,—and entitled to the glories of the kingdom of heaven.

II. *I propose to describe the classes of persons, who reject the doctrine of Christ crucified.*

No one needs to be informed, that there is in the world a large class of *unbelievers, deists, infidels*, who do not assent to the truth of the religion of Christ, but who regard it as a fable, or declare, that they thus regard it. Indisposed to comply with the pure and holy precepts

of the Gospel, they have no means of bringing peace to their guilty consciences, of stilling the tumult in their souls, except by the rejection of the truth, which condemns them. Hence they are ready to listen to objections, which have often been refuted.

As God has accompanied the revelation of his will with various, strong proofs, and commands all men, who hear the Gospel, to believe in the name of his crucified Son, a rejection of the Gospel must be disobedience and sin. How can it be except from an evil heart of unbelief, that one shall remain unconvinced of the divine origin of the Gospel by its ample, abundant evidence?—by the purity of morals, the perfection of virtue, which it enjoins?—by the fulfilment of prophecy, particularly of those prophecies, which relate to the death of Christ and to the dispersion of the Jews,—a people, who while a by-word and reproach among all nations are a standing demonstration of the truth of the Bible?—by the miracles wrought in attestation of the authority of Christ, and by the wonderful success of his Gospel in the world, in defiance of opposing and persecuting power and in resistance to the pride, and prejudice, and arrogance,—to the eloquence and learning,—to the habits and manners of Jew and Gentile?

Another class of persons, who reject the doctrine of *Christ crucified*, consists of those, who *deny his pre-existence*, and *exalted dignity*, and *his coming in the flesh*,—although they may profess to believe in the scriptures.

Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Ghost, speaks of Jesus Christ, when “in the form of God,” as not solicitous to appear as God, or to retain his authority and glory, but as “making himself of no reputation, and

taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men ; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2 : 6—11.

Paul also in another epistle says, that Jesus Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature, for by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him and for him, and by him all things consist." "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell ; and having made peace through the *blood of his cross*, by him to reconcile all things unto himself ; by him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Col. 1.

Jesus Christ himself says—"before Abraham was I am." "I had glory with the Father before the world was." And he speaks of "ascending up where he was before." John 6 : 62. 8 : 58. How is it possible, then, with any respect for scripture, to deny the pre-existence, and authority, and glory of the Son of God ? And with this denial how is it possible to believe the great doctrine of the humiliation and expiatory death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world ?

There is prevalent in the world a false charity, which would break down the distinction between truth and error, and which admits of almost any construction of

the scriptures, provided the scriptures be allowed to be, in some sense, the word of God. But surely an assent to the divine origin of the Bible can be of little advantage, unless the *very truths disclosed* are received into the heart: and in proportion to the *importance* of the truths, in proportion to their adaptation to influence the conduct and affect the character must be the peril of rejecting them. In this point of view those truths, which relate to the pre-existent dignity and condescending love of the Son of God,—“whose name is the only name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved,”—must be deemed of the first magnitude.

How can they, who regard the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, as a *mere man*, believe the doctrine of Christ crucified? What if they say, that Jesus died on the tree? Yet denying his pre-existence,—denying, that by him the worlds were created,—denying, that he came down from heaven,—denying his amazing condescension in becoming flesh, that he might bear our sins in his own body on the tree; how can they believe the great doctrine of the atonement or expiation for sin?

There is a class of persons, who expressly *deny*, that *Christ has made atonement* for sin by his death on the cross: these persons surely must be considered as rejecting the doctrine of *Christ crucified*.

The propitiation made for the sins of the world appears to be the chief, the most distinguishing, and most essential doctrine of the Gospel. Rejecting this, I could not regard myself as a believer in the Gospel. Yet, as you may be aware, there are public teachers and professed followers of Christ, who consider him as saving mankind only by the light of his instructions and the

influence of his example, without attributing any efficacy to his death. But what saith the word of God? “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous: And he is the *propitiation* for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—“God loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”—“Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of himself.”—“We are sanctified through the *offering* of the body of Christ, once for all. After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, he forever sat down on the right hand of God.”—“The Son of Man came to give his life a *ransom* for many.”—“Jesus hath *suffered for sins*, the just for the unjust.”—“He gave himself for us, that he might *redeem* us from all iniquity.”—“He was made sin, or a sin-offering, for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—“He bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”—“He redeems men to God by *his blood*.”—“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

I cannot advert to a multitude of other passages of the same import. These ought to satisfy us, that the doctrine of the expiatory death of Christ is clearly and amply set forth in the scriptures. And that it is an essential or fundamental doctrine appears from the space, which it occupies in the New Testament,—from its being every where taught;—from its being the foundation of the faith in Christ, required of men;—from its being the grand motive to mutual love amongst believers;—and from its being associated with their hopes of everlasting felicity, since their future happiness is expressed by their praising him, who hath redeemed them to God by his blood.

When we read, that Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us ; that we have redemption through his blood ; that we are washed from our sins in his blood ; that his blood cleanseth from all sin ;—when we find the whole texture of the New Testament dyed with the blood of Christ ;—it would seem to be a pitiable perversion of intellect and feeling, which allows of the denial of the sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the world. This great truth is indeed the only hope of the sinner ; for every one, who incurs the penalty of law, must endure that penalty, unless deliverance comes to him from another. Having violated God's command, and being liable to the evil, which it denounces upon the transgressor, there is obviously no way to escape except through his mercy,—except by the method of redemption, which he has disclosed,—except through faith in the expiatory sacrifice, made by his Son for the sins of men.

If, then, we reject this great doctrine of atonement ;—if the cross of Christ seems to us foolishness ;—if it does not beam upon us with splendor ;—if we do not see the mingled justice and goodness of God in the scheme of redemption ;—how can we believe in Christ crucified ? How can we have any correct notions of the evil of sin, —any deep conviction of our own guilt,—any just regard to the honor of the divine law,—any right concern for the interests of holiness and for the order and welfare of the divine kingdom ? If the great design of Christ's coming down from heaven and being made flesh was to be an atoning sacrifice for sin ;—then not to regard him in this light,—is it not refusing to believe in him ?—is it not refusing to come unto him, that we may have life ?—is it not cutting ourselves off from all the benefits of his

death? How, then, can we be justified by faith in the blood of Christ? How can we be redeemed by his blood?

That you may judge, whether some among us do actually “preach Christ crucified,” let me here give you the words of an eminent preacher. Speaking of the doctrine of an infinite atonement, he says,—“I see in it no impression of majesty, or wisdom, or love, nothing worthy of a God; and when I compare it with that nobler faith, which directs our eyes and hearts to God’s essential mercy as our only hope, I am amazed, that any should ascribe to it superior efficacy, as a religion for sinners, as a means of filling the soul with pious trust and love. I know indeed, that some will say, that in giving up an infinite atonement I deprive myself of all hope of divine favor. To such I would say, You do wrong to God’s mercy. On that mercy I cast myself without a fear. I indeed desire Christ to intercede for me. I regard his relation to me as God’s kindest appointment. Through him grace and truth came to me from Heaven, and I look forward to his friendship as among the highest blessings of my whole future being. But I cannot and dare not ask him to offer an infinite satisfaction for my sins; to appease the wrath of God; to reconcile the universal Father to his own offspring; to open to me those arms of Divine mercy, which have encircled and borne me from the first moment of my being. The essential and unbounded mercy of my Creator is the foundation of my hope, and a broader and surer the universe cannot give me.”*

Such is the public teaching of one of our distinguished ministers. I look in vain through the passage quoted

* Channing’s works, p. 426.

for any evidence, that the preacher believed, that the Son of God came down from heaven and gave himself for our sins, and was “a propitiation for the sins of the world.” On the contrary,—in opposing an atonement,—he casts himself on the mercy of God “without a fear.” He says, “the essential and unbounded mercy of my Creator is the foundation of my hope, and a broader and surer the universe cannot give me.”

But I may ask in reply,—Is the goodness of God to man in this world “unbounded” and unconditioned? Are there no laws of wisdom, which regulate the distributions of his kindness? And if those laws be broken, must not the penalty, the evil be endured? If you thrust your hand into the fire, or cast yourself down a precipice; will the divine goodness preserve you from pain, or from broken limbs, or the loss of life? If you do not plough your field and scatter the seed in the furrows, will the divine goodness yet give you a plentiful harvest?

And are there not also conditions in regard to the mercy of God unto eternal life? Is that mercy “unbounded,” unlimited, unconditioned, unregulated? “God is love.” It was his amazing love, which induced him to send his Son from heaven to expiate our sins and to be our Savior. Yet God gives him not as a Savior to us except on the condition of faith in his name,—for “he, that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3: 36.

The question is not concerning God’s essential mercy; but whether, if God,—in order that he may exercise mercy to sinners without impairing his justice and disturbing the order of his wide kingdom,—has in his infinite wisdom and goodness provided a propitiatory

sacrifice, and required the belief of it and a dependence upon the Redeemer for salvation, it can be safe to say, 'We regard not these things, but we cast ourselves fearlessly into the arms of unbounded mercy?'

And how is it consistent for this writer to say,—“I indeed desire Christ to *intercede* for me?” May we not, as he thus speaks of an intercessor for himself with God, turn his own language upon him?—‘You do wrong to God’s mercy.’—Why on that mercy, that ‘essential and unbounded mercy,’ do you not cast yourself without fear and without an *intercessor*?

But he is right in desiring Christ to *intercede* for him, that he may participate in God’s mercy and everlasting love. Yet we may ask, who is the intercessor, but He, in whose blood the redeemed wash their robes and make them white?—but He, who was delivered up to the death of the cross for men’s offences and raised again for their justification? Who is the great High Priest, interceding for men before the throne of God, but He, that has entered heaven by his own blood?

And here I am overwhelmed with astonishment, that any reader of the Bible can find, in a few passages, the doctrine of *intercession*,* and not find in the whole

* In respect to the two places, in which the word *intercession* in application to Christ occurs in the New Testament, (Rom. 8 : 34. Heb. 7 : 25.) the context in both instances refers to the atonement : “He, that spared not his own Son, but *delivered him up for us all*,” preceding one of the passages, and the other is followed by verses, which speak of Christ as a “High Priest—made higher than the heavens,” who needed not, like the earthly high priests, to offer up a daily sacrifice,—“for this he did once, when he *offered up himself*.” It is then a joyful and glorious truth, the sum of the teaching in the epistle to the Hebrews,—“We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” May we all find, that “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit *offered himself* without spot to God, has purged our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Heb. 9 : 14.

texture of the scriptures the doctrine of the *atonement*, or of expiation for sin by Him, who came down from heaven and died on the cross. And although the writer may have said,—“I see in it no impression of majesty, or wisdom, or love, nothing worthy of a God ;” yet the high angelic intelligences of heaven contemplate the scheme of redeeming mercy, as accomplished by the eternal Word made flesh, with admiring wonder, for by the church is made known to the celestial principalities “the manifold wisdom of God ;”—and I pray God, that the writer, on whom I have remarked, and we all may so regard it, and may join the everlasting song of the heavenly host in saying,—“Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood.”

Christ crucified was “to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness ;” and to the present day the great body of *Jews* on the earth remain like their fathers, and there are multitudes of *idolaters*, and *Ma-hometans*, and of *philosophic men*, as well as men who are not philosophers, in Christian countries, who turn away in scorn from the cross of Christ and who reject the only method of salvation. And here I will ask, whether the professors of the Catholic religion do not also render nugatory to themselves the atoning death of the Son of God by engrafting upon it their own inventions ? Instead of relying on the “one sacrifice,” made for sin, have they not invented a *new sacrifice*,—that of a piece of bread, converted, as they maintain, by the priest’s prayer into the real body of Jesus Christ,—and this sacrifice do they not offer on the altar, in ten thousand places, every day ? And is not this in derogation of the atonement, which Christ made, when he offered

up himself? And do not they, who trust in this imaginary sacrifice dishonor and render ineffectual to themselves the sacrifice of himself, which Jesus made “once for all?” Hath not Christ, “by one offering, forever perfected them, that are sanctified?” And is it safe to rely upon new offerings, new expiations, new atoning sacrifices for sin?

There is yet one plausible form, in which a denial of the doctrine of the atonement presents itself, which I ought not to overlook; and that is the assertion, that the death of Christ *seals* his benevolent mission, or gives the strongest testimony to the truth and importance of his instructions; and that this is the sole or chief effect of his death.

But, in reply, I would say: it is not the *death* of a prophet or of a messenger from God, but his *miracles*, which seal his mission, and prove, that he is indeed a messenger from heaven. This was the proof, on which Christ himself rested. He did the *works*, which never before had been done; and therefore he reproved the unbelievers for their sin.

To *prove* the divinity of his mission he restored the withered limbs of the poor cripple;—he opened the closed and disused passages of the ear; he “on the sightless eye-ball poured the day.”

At a marriage feast he changed the water into wine;—in the wilderness he multiplied a few loaves and a few small fishes, so as to feed a famishing multitude of several thousands.

He walked upon the sea as upon the solid ground:—he spoke to the tempest, and the voice of the storm was hushed, and the furious, dashing waves of the sea subsided into the quietness of an infant’s slumber.—He com-

manded the spirits of evil, and they fled away from the miserable victims, whom they had possessed, and went howling down into their abyss.

But more than this ;—he took hold of the marble hand of a dead child, and saying, “damsel, arise !” he presented her alive to the astonished and overwhelmed parental heart :—he stopped a passing bier, which was carrying away the only son of a widow to his long home, and, waking up the dead man, that widow’s heart was melted with gratitude and unutterable joy :—he looked into a desolate tomb, where a poor mortal was mouldering to dust, and by saying,—“Lazarus, come forth !” the dead brother of Martha and Mary came forth in his grave clothes to greet them with a brother’s love.

These were the *seals* of Christ’s mission ;—these were the *proofs*, that he came from God ;—these, as well as his instructions, were the testimonies of his kindness and good will to man.

Why, then, should he travel in a flinty path to the *cross* ? Why should he sweat as it were great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane ? Why was he suspended in torture by nails, driven through his hands and feet ? And why in his mysterious agony did he cry out,—“My God ! my God ! why hast Thou forsaken me ?”

All this is superfluous, unmeaning, incomprehensible, if viewed only as a proof of his divine mission :—but if regarded as a necessary *sacrifice* for sin ; then we see the depths of the divine wisdom and the astonishing wonders of a Savior’s love.

Then, if we have hearts to feel, we say,—‘We will live unto Him, who loved us and died for us !’—“God

forbid, that we should glory save in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. I will now ask your attention very briefly to the character of them, to whom the doctrine of *Christ crucified* is "the *power* of God and the *wisdom* of God."

It is such "unto them, which are called, both Jews and Greeks." The word *call* expresses not only the Gospel message but also the energy of the Spirit in impressing that message on the heart. Thus we read of those, who "were called to be saints,"—of those, who were "called to glory and virtue,"—of those, who were "called with a holy calling,"—of those, who were "called to eternal life," and who are "partakers of the heavenly calling."—"Whom God predestinated, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." All believers or true Christians are then the "called." To them the doctrine of Christ crucified is "the *power* of God," because it is brought to their hearts by the Holy Spirit. "They are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."—"They are washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of their God."

When it pleases God to accompany his truth with power from on high, how triumphant is his Gospel? How many unreflecting sinners are awakened to solemn thought and constrained to inquire—"what shall I do to be saved?" How many scoffers are rendered devout? How is proud philosophy reduced to the docility of a child? How many enemies of the cross of Christ are taught to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, their Lord?" How many sinful men are rendered holy and saved with an

everlasting salvation ? Surely the arm of God, stretched out to give efficacy to the Gospel, is an arm of *power*.

But Christ crucified is also to believers the *wisdom* of God. In the scheme of redemption they discern incomparably greater wisdom, than in all the learned and idle speculations of philosophers. "The world by wisdom knew not God," but "by the foolishness of preaching"—the preaching of the cross—it now pleases God to "save them, that believe." Christ is "of God made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Contemplating the Gospel of Jesus, they perceive the traces of the most perfect wisdom:—they see, that justice and mercy are reconciled;—that God is honored, while the sinner is saved. When they survey the pre-existent glory of Jesus, and then view him in the form of a servant, even condescending to wash his disciples' feet, and dying the just for the unjust,—they see, that such an example is most wisely adapted to abase the pride of man and to teach this great truth, of which the whole heathen world was ignorant, that "by humility are riches, and honor, and life." In short, the more they contemplate the scheme of redemption, in its origin and accomplishment, in its influence and results;—the more they dwell upon Jesus Christ as an example of goodness, as a teacher of righteousness, as a sacrifice for sin and a great High Priest appearing for them in heaven, as the Head and King of Zion;—the more they survey the Gospel in its doctrines and precepts, in its motives and sanctions, in its treasures of truth and its glorious promises;—they are the more deeply penetrated with the consummate and unfathomable wisdom of God in this method of salvation.

With this subject in view, we cannot fail to perceive how great is the goodness of God, if he gives us a *faithful preacher of the cross of Christ*.—Let it be, that our teacher may have the richest endowments of mind, and may address us in all the graces of style, and recommend the moral virtues and even pious sentiments with a noble eloquence. But if any man,—no matter who he is, although in the garb of an angel of light,—brings to us another Gospel besides the true Gospel of Jesus ;—if any man perverts that Gospel, or denies or overlooks its fundamental truths, especially the great doctrine of *the cross*, of the atonement, of the propitiation for sin by the death of Christ ;—he is in the word of God pronounced *accursed*. And can we listen to him without peril ? Can we follow him without losing the blessings of the religion of Christ ?

On this point I feel a strong solicitude for the welfare of a multitude of men in this Christian country, and among them many of my friends and acquaintances. It has been their lot to have for their minister one, who does not believe the great, central truth of the Gospel. He is a man of a good character and good manners,—of intellect and taste. They have been accustomed to respect him,—and perhaps taught to regard him the more for being of a liberal spirit, not severe in doctrine, not stern in his requirements. They know his worth as a man, as a friend. Sometimes he has come to them in their sorrows with a heart of sympathy, and they are sincerely attached to him. But what has all this to do with his capacity to teach them the way of salvation, and with their duty in respect to the acceptance of the chief doctrine of the Gospel ?

In their modesty will they say—‘it is not for them to question the principles of their religious teacher?’ Would they then blindly be idolaters under an idolatrous teacher,—Mahometans under a teacher of the Koran,—and infidels under an infidel lecturer? Or, with a nominal Christianity, are they ready to fall in with the most extravagant and fanatical sect, merely because their teacher happens to belong to that sect? Will they receive every strange construction of the words of scripture, if their teacher adopts the construction? Will they not exercise their own understanding in this most important concern of religion, as they do in all the comparatively trifling interests of the earth? Will they not read the Bible in the exercise of their own reason, and receive its instructions as the teachings of God in their plain, obvious, unwrested meaning?

The Christian religion must have some prominent and essential principles. It is a system, composed of great, leading truths; and it is *but one* system, and its truths are fixed and immutable. Suppose now a person, who professes to believe the Gospel, should reject these truths. Is he a believer of the Gospel? Does he believe the truths, which make up the Gospel? He says indeed, ‘the Bible is the word of God,—the Christian religion is true,—the New Testament, which unfolds the Gospel, is divinely inspired;’—but he rejects the grand principles of the Bible,—he misunderstands the nature of the Christian religion,—he is ignorant of the elements of the Gospel. How is he then a Christian, a believer, a disciple of Christ? Or if, by any possibility, he could be;—yet how could he be qualified to be the teacher of the Gospel to others?

I wish to make this subject plain beyond all misapprehension. Let me then call in the aid of some analogous, illustrative statement. We boast of our national, republican constitution. It is provided in the constitution, that the President shall be chosen for four years only, instead of holding his office for life, like a monarch; and that the Senators shall be chosen for six years and the Representatives for two years, instead of holding their places for life, like the nobles in a monarch's house of lords. Now your neighbor says, he receives and will support our excellent constitution,—but then he construes the provisions, referred to, very differently from the way, in which you cannot but understand them:—he says, they require the President, Senators, and Representatives to be chosen for *life*. You cry out in astonishment, that the constitution is explicit to the contrary! You are amazed, that any intellect can find in the American constitution a monarch for life.

But how can I be less amazed and astonished, when one, who professes to believe the Gospel, alleges, that it says nothing about a *propitiation* for the sins of the world, made by the death of Jesus Christ;—nothing about redemption by his blood;—nothing about salvation by faith in him and not by works;—nothing about the preaching of *the cross* as the wisdom of God and the power of God to the salvation of them, who believe; or explains away and reduces to nothingness all these expressions?

How can I be less amazed, if one should say,—‘I am a good Christian and believe the Bible,—but then the Gospel is not to any a stumbling block or foolishness;—the death of Christ has no relation to the pardon of sin;

—his cross is not to man the purchase of an immortal crown ;—he is not a Redeemer but only an exemplar and teacher of virtue ?—How can I be less amazed, if one should say,—‘ our charity must embrace as a Christian every man,—however he may understand the propositions of the Bible, its elementary, constitutional provisions,—however he may reject its plain truths,—if he will only lay his hand upon a certain book, bound in black covers, and say,—I believe this book to be the word of God ?’ How can I be less amazed, if my brother, whose immortal welfare I desire in my heart, should trust the salvation of his ever-living soul to the guidance of a teacher, who attaches no value to the preaching of *the cross*,—who understands not the meaning of the expiatory death of Jesus, or his propitiation for sin, and justification by the blood of Christ ?

Let it be, that the teacher is a worthy man of exemplary conduct, and was your father’s friend and is your friend :—the affair of saving the soul in eternity is not an affair to be neglected or trifled with on account of the chains of custom and the restraints of courtesy. God has endued us with reason and required us to exercise it in the study of the Bible—in the search for truth in his word :—we are bound to see, as we may see, with our own eyes :—but if instead of doing this we follow a fallible guide, an erring teacher, a blind leader, —and he should lead us in the path of death ; whom could we blame but our leader and ourselves ? Should we not be the cause of our own ruin ?

Never, therefore, can I as a preacher call upon my hearer to receive without examination what I bring to him as truth ;—but I say to him,—‘ Search the scriptures, whether these things are not so.’ If he replies,—

‘my own preacher, whom I usually hear, teaches me an opposite system ;’ then I say to him more emphatically, —‘Search the scriptures :—study them with all diligence, and sobriety, with prayer, casting away your prejudices, and prepossessions, and perhaps long cherished opinions. Examine well, whether *the cross of Christ* in its relation to the pardon of sin and the redemption of the soul is not the great, central truth of the Christian religion ? And if it be, then judge, whether you and I ought not, like Paul, with tears to look upon one,—whatever may be his endowments or his virtues,—who is an “*enemy of the cross of Christ* ?”’

For many years it has pleased God to incline me to study the scriptures daily. I am persuaded, that I understand the import of *the preaching of the cross*, as Paul, and Peter, and John understood it. I think I understand it also, as it was understood by Luther and Calvin, by Hooker and Baxter, by Howe, and Doddridge, and Watts, and Barrow,—by Whitefield and Wesley,—by our pilgrim fathers and their children,—by Edwards, and Davies, and Witherspoon, and Dwight, and Appleton.—I am persuaded, that I understand it, as it is understood by many Christian sects, who differ in some unimportant points,—by Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and our own most simple, evangelical sect of Congregationalists.

I come to you and urge you to accept the salvation of the cross.—With an honest zeal my beloved son, whom you this day with united will receive as your minister, urges upon you the same duty.—Do any of you hesitate ? We would not overpower you by human authority ; but we say to you,—our belief has been the belief of the most learned and pious Christians of

different denominations, ever since the Gospel was first announced, while the denial of the doctrine of the cross,—of redemption by the blood of Christ and deliverance from the wrath to come by his sacrifice,—has been confined to a very small company of professed believers in the Gospel. Let this fact loosen the strength of your self-confidence and lead you to earnestness of inquiry. But found your opinions,—not upon man,—but upon the plain testimony of God. What God hath spoken is true,—and will forever be truth,—though every man be a liar. Search for yourselves. Examine, whether the whole structure of the Jewish sacrifices is not typical of the sacrifice of the *Lamb of God*, which taketh away the sins of the world?—symbolical of Him, who by one offering,—even of himself,—hath forever perfected them, that are sanctified?—Examine, whether the wonderful occurrence in the wilderness, when the elevation of the brazen serpent on a pole was the means of cure to the wretched Israelites, bitten by serpents, was not designed to represent the death on *the cross* of Him, whose death is the life of the world?—Examine, whether the prophets do not speak of one, who was to be “wounded for the transgressions” of men and “bruised for their iniquities,” and by whose “stripes” they were to be “healed?”—Examine, whether “in the fulness of time” God did not send forth his Son,—even from “the glory,” which he had “with the Father before the world was,”—“made under the law, that he might *redeem* them, which were under the law?”—Examine, whether the four *Gospels* are not a history of the life, teachings, and miracles with the expiatory death of the Son of God?—Whether the book of *Acts* is not a history of the labors of his apostles in proclaiming far and near the

glad tidings of redemption by his blood?—Whether the *Epistles* do not explain most clearly the efficacy of his sacrifice on the cross in taking away the sin of the world and the method of justification and salvation by faith in his name?—Whether the *Epistle to the Hebrews* especially does not give us a minute and extended comparison of the Jewish sacrifices with the sacrifice of the Son of God, showing the reference of the former to the latter, asserting the inefficacy of the Jewish offerings and the perpetual efficacy of the death of Christ to take away sin,—teaching that the old institution was about to vanish away but that Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises,—that as the High Priest went once a year with blood of animals into the holy place of the tabernacle, so Jesus by his own blood hath entered once into heaven, having obtained for us eternal redemption,—and that as he, who despised Moses' law, died without mercy, so must he be deemed worthy of sorer punishment, who treads under foot the Son of God, and counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace?—Examine, whether there is not here disclosed to us a resemblance, a correspondence, a beauty, a harmony?—whether the numerous sacrifices of the Jewish law, if denied to have a reference to Christ, do not appear unmeaning, and idle, and useless; but, if considered as typical of a better sacrifice, or shadowing forth the method of redemption by Jesus Christ, whether light and order are not introduced, where there was only darkness, and confusion?—Examine, whether the *last book* of scripture does not bring to us the sublimest descriptions relating to the redeeming power of the blood of Christ?—

Whether it does not unveil to us the invisible world and bring to us the voices of the hosts of angels and of the throng of redeemed men,—their voices as of great waters and like mighty thunderings,—the voices of “ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands,—saying, Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing?” Whether all the ransomed from among *men* do not say,—“Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?” And whether the great multitude, human and angelic, do not cry out,—“Blessing and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the *Lamb* forever and ever?”

After such an examination can you doubt, whether **THE CROSS OF CHRIST**, or the redemption of men from sin and misery by his expiatory death is the great, central truth of the Christian system?

Believe this truth: believe with the heart unto righteousness, and make confession with the lips unto salvation, and keep the commandments of Jesus:—so shall the doctrine of Christ crucified be to you “the power of God and the wisdom of God;”—so shall you forever in heaven extol the grace, the love, the mercy of Him, who died on the cross as a sacrifice for your sins and for your eternal redemption. **AMEN.**

